



Drilling Won't Harm Environment

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Like most parents, when I hear my children say "I can't," I remind them that they can do anything if they put their minds to it and work hard. That embodies the American dream. It's the "can do" attitude that earned Henry Ford his Model T, the Wright Brothers their Kitty Hawk, Bill Gates his Microsoft and the United States of America its first man on the moon.

If you listen to the scare tactics of radical environmentalists and their allies in Congress, however, we can't produce energy in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge without "devastating" the environment.

Not true. American ingenuity and current technology can be deployed now to develop ANWR with great environmental safety. All we need is the will to do it.

Despite popular misconceptions, energy production and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the Clinton administration's 1999 Energy Department report, "Environmental Benefits of Advanced Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Technology," documents the innovations that make energy production and environmental protection mutually achievable — even in the Arctic.

Ice roads and ice pads allow highly trained experts to conduct their work without any impact on the frozen tundra below. In addition, advanced 3-D seismic, 4-D visualization and remote sensing technologies drastically reduce the number of wells required to develop the resource, thereby lessening the amount of potential surface disturbance. That's why legislation in Congress targets production to only 2,000 of ANWR's 19.6 million acres. To put that in perspective, the size of the average farm in South Dakota is more than 1,400 acres.

Once we put these technologies and safeguards to work, we can produce energy in ANWR without environmental harm. And we should.

The mean estimate of economically recoverable oil in ANWR is 10.3 billion barrels. By comparison, that is more than double the total proven reserves in the state of Texas and almost half America's total 22.3 billion barrel reserve. At today's prices, that is \$300 billion we would not be sending overseas funding governments and regimes that hate Americans. It also represents a staggering \$120 billion in tax revenues the federal treasury could put toward health care, prescription drugs, education or social security.

Organized labor supports ANWR exploration and production because of the massive ripple effect it would have for American jobs. Demand for workers in sectors such as steel, piping equipment, computers, software, geophysical and engineering services, transportation, electronics and communications would increase. All told, 2,000 acres on the North Slope of Alaska could create more than 730,000 good jobs in the United States.

Even the location of ANWR lends an argument for safe exploration. The area in which development would occur is on the northern slope, frozen and completely without sunlight for several months of the year. Except for the Inupiat Eskimo families, the northern slope is uninhabited.

Unlike many in the lower 48 states (and some in Congress) who don't want energy production in their backyards, the Inupiat people do. The Inupiat people were given land in ANWR as a settlement with the federal government for their aboriginal claims. However, federal law prohibits them from using their lands until Congress votes to open ANWR.

I have visited ANWR in the summer and winter and have spoken with the Inupiat people. They live in the harshest climate on Earth and want only the opportunity to improve their lives, and the lives of their children, like any other American. The Inupiat, and 75 percent of all Alaskans, want responsible production of energy on their lands.

Nonetheless, fanatics in the environmental fundraising community continue to willfully and purposely ignore the facts. Their scare tactics would have you believe we can't, when the science and technology says we can. Their direct-mail pieces will tell you that production harms the caribou, even though herd populations have increased from 3,000 to 32,000 since production began in Prudhoe Bay. They'll tell you there is not enough oil in ANWR to justify exploration, even though this field is likely to be the biggest ever discovered in the United States. Then they might even tell you that we consume too much of the world's energy and have little of its supplies, even though our economy fuels one-third of the world's economic output. Finally, they'll tell you we should rely solely on conservation, even though you can't conserve your way out of an empty tank of gas.

Ingenuity and affordable energy made the United States the great nation it is today. Americans throughout history have put readily available energy to use in pursuit of a better way of life and a better quality of life. Prescription drugs, health care technology, automobiles, televisions, cellphones and the Internet would not have been possible without reliable and affordable energy.

If we in Congress accept the argument that we can't explore for more energy in ANWR, it will be a sad political commentary. Technology and American workers will enable us to produce energy in ANWR with incredible environmental safety. As the world's leader in environmental protection, it is irresponsible for us to import oil from Third World countries that produce it recklessly. We can and must do our national security, environment and economy a great service by opening ANWR.

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